



More than 50 tons of improperly managed hazardous materials were removed from border warehouses from 2001 to 2003

Pollution Prevention

Border Industries and Compliance

Border Challenge:

Every year, thousands of tons of hazardous waste wait in warehouses and are eventually moved across the border for recycling or disposal in the U.S. and Mexico. When waste is not managed properly, it poses an issue for environmental justice, creates an opportunity for possible terrorists, and puts the health of all border residents at risk. Concern has mounted that start-up small businesses and warehouse managers involved with the storage and trans-boundary movement of hazardous waste in the border region may not be aware of their environmental obligations to the border community.

EPA Accepts the Challenge:

The EPA, the Texas Commission for Environmental Quality (TCEQ), and US Customs came together to inspect border warehouses for possible hazardous waste management violations. At the end of FY2002, more than 50 tons of improperly managed hazardous materials were removed from border warehouses. In 2003, at least 50 warehouses were inspected in the El Paso, Texas border region, and in 2004, another 50 in the Laredo, Texas region. As a result of the "Border Warehouse Initiative," several warehouse managers were made aware of the consequences of not properly storing these dangerous materials.

The Region, in conjunction with the TCEQ, conducted seminars that provided businesses connected with the US Mexico border with information and tools to understand the laws, policies and government agencies that regulate their industry, and the benefits to self-disclosure when violations are discovered.

As a pollution prevention measure, the EPA and the National Center for Manufacturing Sciences created the Border Compliance Assistance Center, a web site launched in the Fall of 2003, with fully functional pages in both Spanish and English. The site provides advice, describes bureaucratic processes, and lists regulations for the hazardous waste transport industry in the border region. The Border Compliance Assistance Center web site averages over 4,000 hits per day.

With recent concerns about homeland security, it is even more important to minimize delays at the border from the hazardous waste transport industry. Preparing transports, through the Border Compliance Assistance Center, with everything they need for border crossing, this will help keep the borders secure, and keep the traffic flowing freely with less environmental consequences.

